Press release

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17 November 2000

Release number 443

Truly local weather forecasts for any location in the UK will be available on your mobile phone on Monday, direct from the Met Office.

The "Time&Place" service - using WAP or basic text messaging service SMS - gives weather updates for a customer's required postcode, down to 5 km radius and not simply for the region in which they live. It is capable of delivering latest data on the hour every hour if required. UK weather is also available for up to five days ahead.

The launch of the new service for consumers comes just days after the Met Office unveiled its new look and vision for the future. The technology follows the Met Office's drive for innovation with the use of new delivery mechanisms, like mobile telephony, to provide its world-class forecasts.

The Met Office has invested £2 million in developing "Time&Place" and a new web site. To support the launch, the marketing campaign will include highly innovative advertising, a nation-wide poster campaign and national press ads.

Stephen Lawrenson, Managing Director of the Met Office's Commercial Division, predicts that the investment will pay off as part of the group's long term business planning.

Mr Lawrenson said: "We're recognised around the globe as world leaders in weather forecasting but feel that in the UK we've been seen as a rather old fashioned organisation and the people who do the bit on the TV after the news.

"The new Met Office brand unveiled last week is representative of the way we believe we must develop to maintain our commercial edge in the future. The launch of "Time&Place" shows we have innovative products and services to offer to UK consumers, businesses and the international market.

"We decided it made sense for us to devise a service which we could provide directly to the public. The demand is growing rapidly for more personalised and localised information and we have the know-how and technology in place which allows us to offer a product which far outstrips anything previously offered by other providers."

The Met Office already provides tailor-made services to dozens of industries from retail to utilities. But this is the first time it has offered such a sophisticated service to the general public.

From tomorrow, customers will be able to sign up to the service on subscription with the ability to prepay for an agreed amount of messages -at just 20p a message. Subscribers can customise their information by entering their location and mobile 'phone number on the web site

"Our innovative application of this latest technology means that we can now give customers advance weather forecasts which are accurately targeted for their home, office, golf course, or weekend break destination - it really is a significant breakthrough," Mr Lawrenson added.

For more information and to register online, go to www.metoffice.gov.uk.

WAP users can access the service by typing www.mymetoffice.com/main.wml on their WAP phone.

If you have any queries about the web site please call the Customer Centre on 0870 900 5454.

Note:

The new Met Office service is in association with WIN, a highly respected pioneer in the area of wireless data transmission, and specialises in the provision of applications and content to wireless devices including handsets, pagers, mobile phones and PDAs.

The Met Office is at the forefront of providing services to wireless users via SMS, WAP and it is working closely with network operators on GPRS and UMTS. As part of its services, WIN also develops bespoke wireless applications such as personalised news alerts to mobile phones, and wireless voice and e-mail applications, so users can keep in touch while on the move.

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